Social Media Adoption by Apparel Consumers: Precursors and Outcomes

Synopsis

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1.0 Introduction

Today, the internet is the backbone of the society. The constant expansion of social media may be traced back to the internet's widespread accessibility. The initial step in the evolution of social media was the introduction of e-mail, which allowed people to interact and network with friends, family, and peers all over the world.

The rise of internet-mediated communication tools, particularly social media, has altered the way consumers, brands, and communities communicate (Hsu, 2019). The extraordinary use of social media by consumers is primarily responsible for its widespread popularity. Consumers' perceptions of knowledge and communication have shifted significantly because of social media.

1.1 The World of Digital Social Media

Today, social media is the major focus at the global level. Organizations built websites and applications to for individuals, groups, and the public in the society to connect with each other based on their needs and interests.

Amongst the previous segment tools, social networking sites (SNSs) and blogs have seen the most rapid growth. The majority of these online web apps are classified as "social media." Social media refers to web-based communication technologies that help and empower individuals to communicate with one another by allowing them to share and consume information (Nations, 2017). Most people who have access to the internet use it to communicate with their family and friends. The concept of Social Media Marketing was born as a result of marketers recognizing this as a cost-effective and profitable way of building a trusting relationship with current and future customers.

1.2 Social Media Statistics in India

Growing digitalization efforts combined with low data prices enabled a significant number of people to use the internet actively across India. Indians, on average, spend about 2.36 hours on social media daily. In India, the number of social media users has been growing in 2022 at a steady rate of 467 million due to deep penetration of internet connectivity among people. The number of Internet users in India has grown to a whopping 658 million, which is roughly 47% of the total population of India. Now, social media has become one of the most essential parts of daily internet usage in India.

In India, Instagram is the most used social media platform in 2022 with 76.50% of the social media users enrolled A few other social media platforms that are popular in India are Twitter (44.90% penetration), LinkedIn (37.2% penetration), Pinterest (34.9% penetration) (*https://www.theglobalstatistics.com/india-social-media-statistics/*).

OBERLO
Customers
Are Using Social Media
54%
of Social Browsers use social media to research products.
OBERLO
The Impact of Positive
Customer Experience
71%
of consumers who have had a positive experience with a brand on social media are likely to recommend the brand to their friends and family.
OBERLO
Influencers
Help Build Brand Trust
49%
of consumers depend on influencer recommendations on social media.

Fig 1 – Social media Facts
(Source: *https://www.oberlo.in/blog/social-media-marketing-statistics (2022)*

1.3 Shopping on social media

Social shopping platforms and social shopping apps have gained immense popularity in recent times. Social shopping platforms & apps have enormous commerce spectrum. These are platforms and apps that allow brands to convert their social media into social storefronts, thus promoting social commerce. Social commerce is a segment of ecommerce in which merchants sell products directly through social media platforms, allowing potential customers to interact with brands, browse goods and make purchases.

The young social media users will account for 62 per cent of global social commerce spend by 2025. By 2025, the highest numbers of social commerce purchases globally are expected in clothing, consumer electronics and home décor *(https://www.business- standard.com/article/international/)*.

1.4. Reasons for social media shopping

The factors responsible for rise in social commerce are as follows-

a) **The shortened customer journeys**

b) **The influence of social proof**

c) **The power of influencers on consumer buying decisions**

d) **Easier Purchase Decision Process through Social Media**

During the purchase decision process, consumers go through 5 stages:

Recognition of Needs ➔ Search for information ➔ Evaluation of alternatives ➔Purchase ➔Post-purchase evaluation / Outcomes (Engel et al 1990)

On each stage of this process, consumers require specific information support. Social media, delivers word-of-mouth from friends as well as opinion leaders, e.g. fashion bloggers or celebrities, which is supposed to play an important role and also as well as commercial information from businesses and brands helps the consumers to make their purchase decisions.

1.5 Social media platforms for shopping

Social Commerce is the practice of using social media to market an ecommerce store. Ecommerce stores can use social media to build brand awareness, attract online followers, and generate online sales. Companies can also use social media to get their brand, profile, and products shared online. With more social media users buying online each year, social commerce industry is booming.

1.6 Social Media and Apparel Industry

Social media is extremely important in the fashion sector and in communicating with customers. This illustrates the close relationship between consumer decision-making processes and purchases and social media. The higher purchase volume adds to increased profit for the industry, emphasizing the significance of customer buying decisions. This has resulted in the development of a distinct online culture for the fashion business, allowing clients all over the world to readily become aware of the industry's current goods and trends (Leemon, 2015).

1.7 Apparel shopping on Social Media

Based on the public visibility, apparel shopping is perceived as a signal of consumers' personality, lifestyle and status (Langner 2012). In comparison with other consumer goods, clothing is heavily prone to social influences. Additionally, apparel purchases are often driven by hedonic instead of utilitarian benefits (Andrée 2013). Due to this emotional and personal character, apparel purchase decisions are associated with a high level of involvement and increased uncertainty about product choices. This results in an intensified need for advice. The social media enables users to access different types of resources at large quantity and to expand user's social environment. It can be expected that this extended social environment has an impact on the purchase decision.

In the current study, the researcher seeks to determine the influence of social media adoption and its impact on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions when making purchasing decisions for apparels.

1.8 Attitude and Purchase Intention of Consumers

1.8.1 Consumers' Attitude:

An individual's favourable or negative feelings about completing the target behaviour are characterized as their attitude toward the behaviour (Fisbein and Ajzen, 1975). Motivation is defined as the reason that causes or encourages someone to act or behave in a particular way. (Sri & Asnawati, 2018).

a) Utilitarian motivation - Utilitarian aspect of an attitude toward behaviour relates to usefulness, value, and wise-ness of the behaviour as perceived by the consumer.

b) Hedonic motivation-Intends to be more enjoyable or intangible. Hedonic motivations are defined as consumers′ enjoyment of the shopping experience itself (Solomon, 2018).

1.8.2 Consumers' Purchase Intention

Consumers' purchase intention is a combination of their interest in the goods and their likelihood of buying it. Purchase Intention predicts future behaviour of customers depending on their attitudes (Kim &Ko, 2010).

In general, social media users behave in the same way when it comes to purchasing the product with the most positive reviews. Social media's promotional incentives, interaction platforms, engagement, customer endorsement, electronic word of mouth through customer evaluations, credibility, and contentment all have a beneficial impact on purchase decisions.

1.9 Social media Adoption & TAM (Technology Acceptance Model)

The technology acceptance model (TAM) is a theory of information systems that describes how consumers accept and use technology. The purpose of this model is to predict the acceptability of a tool and to identify the modifications which must be brought to the system in order to make it acceptable to users. This model suggests that the acceptability of an information system is determined by two main factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

Perceived usefulness is defined as being the degree to which a person believes that the use of a system will improve his performance. **Perceived ease of use** refers to the degree to which a person believes that the use of a system will be effortless.

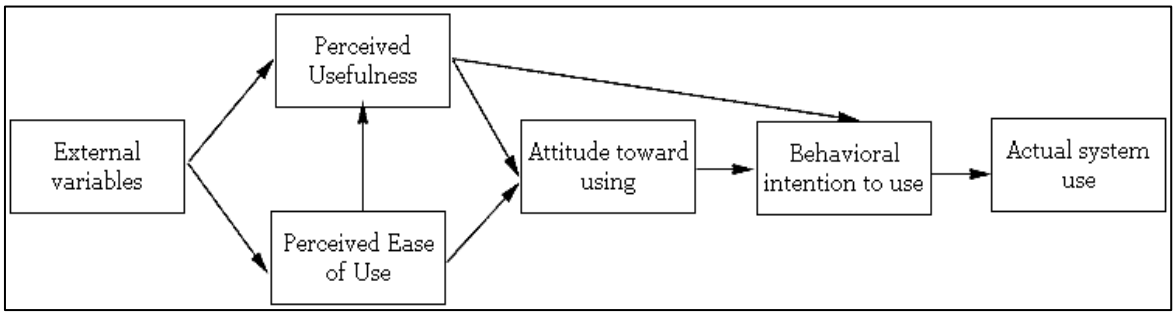


Fig – 2 Concept of TAM (*Intentions to Use Social Networking Sites (SNS) Using Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): An Empirical Study)*
(Source: *Davis (1985)*

External influences such as social influence have a significant role in determining attitude. Davis et al. (1992) later expanded on this model by including an "enjoyment" element. Other models have evolved from this previous model, incorporating other criteria in understanding adoption intention.

1.10 External influences of social media affecting consumer buying behaviour and consumer purchase intensions

Social media has a significant influence in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Social media influences the target consumers' behaviour in a variety of ways.

1.10.1 Enjoyment

Enjoyment is essential for the online purchase of things. Higher rates of consumer experienced pleasure in an online purchase contribute to a greater probability of online transactions (Dellaert, 2004).

1.10.2 Electronic Word of Mouth (e-Wom)

E-WOM is characterized as like or sharing material on an electronic platform, and several researchers have argued that e-WOM is a key to success in online marketing.

1.10.3 Reward

Consumers are constantly looking for methods to gain economic benefits, that's why rewards is regarded as a significant aspect in customer engagement.

1.10.4 Interaction

Social media has evolved as the most recent marketing tool, allowing businesses and customers to communicate online at any time (Boateng and Okoe, 2015).

1.10.5 Celebrity/Influencer Endorsement

Using celebrities to advertise products is a long-standing and important tactic employed by many major corporations. (Katyal, 2007). Celebrity endorsement has given rise to influencer marketing.

1.10.6 Recommendations from Friends

The usage of social media presents a great tool for businesses, as a satisfied user of a product can suggest it to other potential customers by clicking a "like" button or recommending the product to another client (Forbes, 2019).

1.10.7 Trust

In online commerce, trust is the underlying basis for communication and interpersonal relationships. Users of social media prefer to make purchases from reputable websites (Gundlach and Murphy, 1993).

1.11 Social Media Campaigns

A social media campaign is a coordinated marketing effort to reinforce or assist with a goal using one or more social media platforms. Campaigns differ from everyday social media efforts because of their increased focus, targeting and measurability.

Social media has rapidly become an essential marketing and communication tool for Govt., private, public and non-governmental organizations, institutes, and autonomous bodies across the world to promote their organizational mission, vision, action, publications, events and initiatives. (Labafi & Robati, 2016).

1.12 Social Media campaigns for Sustainability

Environmental issues are increasingly becoming of concern to the global community. There is thus societal pressure to create environmental awareness which is essential for informing people about the effects of global warming and other environmental hazards. The increase of environmental awareness has risen relatively in proportion to the demand for sustainable practices.

However, the role of social media to communicate the idea of environmental sustainability and its awareness is not well understood. Social media campaigns enhance the user sustainable

participation in protecting the environment and changing environmentally unsafe behaviours to reduce pollution, and to encourage the efforts to sustain the environment, to improve the balanced averment, through a sustainable development.

1.13 Sustainability in the Apparel Industry

In recent decades, there has been a growing awareness of the fact that the fashion industry is a particularly unsustainable and environmentally harmful sector of the economy (Rissanen, 2011). There are also significant social and ethical problems that can be traced back to certain aspects of fashion production and consumption (Thomas, 2018). The design, production, and consumption of fashion and apparel are, therefore, strongly linked to sustainable development challenges and their various dimensions, ranging from the ecological to the socio-economic and cultural. In response to these challenges, diverse approaches have emerged with the view of making fashion more sustainable (Roos, 2017).

The present study deals with analyzing the role of social media adoption in attitude and purchase of apparel consumers'. Since the researcher is already involved with social media and its operations, the researcher aims to utilize social media as a tool to create awareness related to Sustainable fashion as a part of societal contribution, for this being a crucial need of the hour.

1.14 Need and Relevance of the Study

In today's society, relying just on traditional marketing strategies to engage, develop brand awareness, and build brands is simply not enough. The increasing power of social media is having an impact on customers of all demographics. Social media allows viewers, consumers, and industries have rapid access to the accessible content and can view it according to their preferences. Second, bloggers and companies keep up with fast changing trends in order to provide information to viewers, consumers, and industry professionals, allowing the latter to be fully informed about the items that are being released in the market.

Additionally, as stated by Reilly & Hynan (2014), by comparing channels of communications social media is more effective in conveying the brand's message as it is interactive and creates a sense of brand community. And because of its direct dialog it is more transparent to customers (Lee, 2009), therefore direct discussions about sustainability on channels like Instagram can influence customers

more effectively than any other traditional media. Thus, as social initiative, the researcher intends to design social media campaigns and try creating knowledge and awareness related to sustainable apparel designs and several related aspects.

1.15 Research Rationale

Social media was first introduced in the early 2000s, but it has only been in the last decade that it has gained traction in the apparel Industry (Kim and Ko, 2010). The fast development and widespread acceptance of social media by both apparel consumers and firms has significantly enhanced academic studies on the use of social media marketing in the fashion sector (Boerman et al., 2020; Naeem, 2020). The need for peer validation, seeking inspiration from fashion influencers, and following celebrity styles online, combined with an increasing desire for sharing, discussing, and exchanging opinions about fashion brands online, as well as a need for maintaining relevance and portraying a social image online (Nash, 2019; Nelson et al., 2019), highlights the transformed consumer behaviour.

This study intends to identify the factors contribute to the success of social commerce among social media users. This study will try to develop the relationship between demographics, TAM variables, and other external factors affecting the social media adoption of apparel consumers. It will attempt to ascertain the factors influencing the social media users' perceived ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment of social commerce, which then leads to towards social media adoption and affects the attitude and purchase intentions of apparel consumers.

Additionally, social media will be used to create knowledge and awareness the study will also try to impart education and awareness related to sustainability issues in Apparel design.

Based on these lines the following research is proposed with the following topic.

1.16 Statement of the Problem

Based on the above lines, the following statement of problem is proposed-

Social Media Adoption by Apparel Consumers:

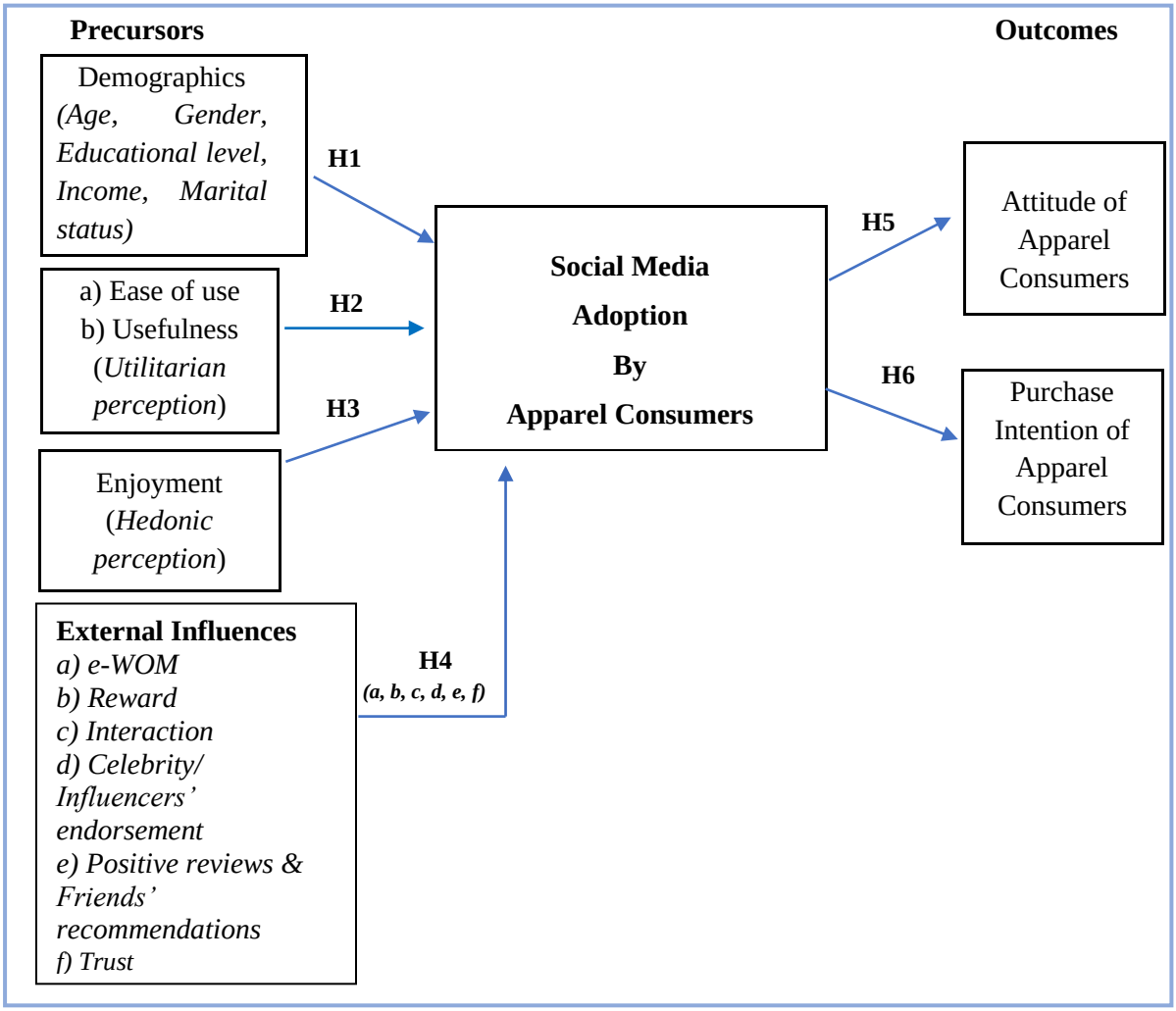
Precursors and Outcomes

1.17 Research Objectives: The following specific objectives have been formulated-

1. To investigate and conceptualize the basic perceptions of social media adoption of the apparel consumers.

2. To examine the role of precursors on social media adoption of apparel consumers.
3. To examine the impact of pandemic and lockdowns on adoption of social media by apparel consumers.
4. To provide appropriate practical and social implications of social media adoption of apparel consumers.
5. To design social media campaigns to generate awareness related to sustainability in apparel design amongst the consumers.

1.18 Conceptual Framework of the study



(Fig – 3 Conceptual Framework of the Study)

1.19 Hypothesis of the study

Based on the above conceptual framework, the following hypothesis are proposed-

H1 - The Social Media adoption is affected by Demographics of the apparel consumers.

H2- Perceived ease of use and Perceived usefulness of social media positively influences social media adoption of apparel consumers.

H3 - Perceived enjoyment of social media positively affects social media adoption of apparel consumers.

H4 - External Influences - *a) e-WOM, b)Reward, c) Interaction, d) Celebrity/ Influencers' endorsement, e) Positive reviews & Friends' recommendations, f) Trust* positively encourage social media adoption of apparel consumers.

H5 - Social media adoption positively influences attitude of apparel consumers

H6 - Social media adoption positively influences their purchase intention of apparel consumers

2.0 Literature Review

Review is the procedure of reading, understanding, examining, assessing, and summarizing academic materials regarding a specific subject topic. A literature review is content written or printed by researchers to examine the grave points of existing knowledge including original findings, as well as hypothetical and methodological contribution to a topic. Extensive review has been done based on the conceptual framework and objectives of the study.

2.1 Social Media

Kalia (2020) investigated social media as an innovative teaching tool and highlighted the relevance and importance of social media, in the educational industry. In an era when global is the term used to describe a global platform for individuals to share and trade their beliefs, culture, traditions, knowledge, and perspectives, our educational system need modification, and social media should be widely used for educational purposes, improved research, and networking.

Ansari et al. (2020) inferred that using online social media for collaborative learning had a significant impact on peer interaction, teacher interaction, and knowledge sharing behaviour online. Social media thus leads to collaborative learning and helps students become more creative, dynamic, and research oriented.

2.2 Technology acceptance model (TAM) & Usage of Social Media

Tripathi (2014) extended the technology acceptance model (TAM).Along with the factors of perceived risk, trust, perceived attractiveness, and the researcher proposed a research model as the

Social Networking Sites Adoption model based on TAM to evaluate the intention to adopt social media networking sites.

Peter (2015) suggested that the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis et al., 1989) is one of the most widely employed models in investigations of technology usage behaviour.

Khan et al (2021) identified the underlying drivers impacting on healthcare professionals' social media usage behaviours using the technology acceptance model (TAM) as the theoretical lens. Furthermore, perceived social media usefulness positively affected social media usage adoption of healthcare professionals.

2.3 Consumer's Attitude towards Social Media

Park (2017) conducted a study which identified the various features of social consumers (i.e., online social search, online social navigation, and online social connection) and investigated the effects of social consumer traits on their attitude with fashion brands via brands' Social Networking sites.

Brindha et al. (2021) discussed that Internet and especially social media have transformed how consumers and marketers communicate. The social media environment is very easy way to reach the customers. The study identified the difference in belief and attitude of consumers due to social media marketing and provided practical insights to social media advertisers to approach the consumers.

Taha et al. (2021) stated that consumer attitude towards apparel purchase has rapidly changed, with the advent of online options. Now, customers can compare products available in different sites; add enough filters to match their criteria with reference to style, fabric, budget etc. As a result the consumers have a positive attitude towards social media shopping but there are variations possible due to different demographics.

2.4 Social Media Adoption and Consumers' Purchase Intention

Gupta et al. (2020) inferred that the evolution of social media has transformed the engagement and communication between businesses, customers, and other stakeholders. Purchase intent can be influenced by a variety of cultural, emotional, logical, moral, psychological, and economic reasons. The study examined the influence of social media influences consumer buy intentions and the many elements that influence consumer purchase intentions on social media.

Varghese (2021) stated that social media is quickly becoming a new craze. The researcher investigated the impact of quantity of content and user-generated information on customers' purchasing habits and the impact of demographic characteristics on customer purchase intentions.

Patil etal. (2021), explained that the goal of the information exploration is to identify a list of options that represent accurate purchasing possibilities. Throughout the process, the customer engages in a series of psychological assessments of various solutions in order to find the best value. Consumers form a buy intention near the end of the evaluation step, which may or may not materialize into an actual product purchase.

Majeed etal. (2021) explored the positive significant correlations between brand equity and customer purchase intention and offered recommendations for garment industry executives, policymakers, and future researchers

2.5 Role of External Influences in Social Media Adoption by Consumers

Ebrahim (2019) demonstrated that the Social media marketing activities comprise only three dimensions; trendiness, customization and word-of-mouth. These attributes of social media marketing directly influence brand loyalty and indirectly influence brand equity mediated by brand trust. The study emphasis the role of trust and provide guidance toward measuring the effectiveness of social media marketing.

Nawi et al. (2019) inferred that risk and trust are the most important factors influencing the adoption of social media as a business platform. Based on the findings, government agencies should promote social media as a business platform by instilling trust in the system with the hope that it will positively affect entrepreneurial activities using social media as a business platform.

Shouman (2020) conducted research to study the impact of the use of celebrities in social media advertising on the consumer behaviour and the role celebrities can play in brand associations. The results show that a consumer find the use of celebrity endorsement on social media believable and helps them better remember a brand or a product.

Naqvi et al. (2020) explored the factors affecting the pervasive adoption of social media by employing the use and gratification theory in considering their entertainment value, social influence,

process of compliance, internalization, identification, and trust to investigate the sustainability of intentions to use social networking sites.

Yaaseen and Jusoh (2021) explored the determinants of e-WOM information on social media which influence the purchasing intentions of consumers. This study will help marketers for understanding e-WOM dynamics on social media platforms and consequently developing better strategies of marketing.

2.6 Social media and its Campaigns as a tool to enhance the Knowledge &Awareness of consumers towards Sustainability

Mallick & Bajpai (2019) stated the importance of environmental education in determining the value of social media can be done through interaction between environmental educators and students or common people. People are using social media nowadays to support environmental campaigns and to connect people locally and globally on minor to major environmental issues.

Leenders (2019) conducted a study with the goal to examine the influence of social media influencers on customers' attitudes, awareness, and purchasing intentions regarding sustainable fashion.

Weder and Lee (2021) portrayed that the global fashion business is a huge threat to sustainability, prompting the development of sustainable fashion concepts such as slow fashion. The study covered a research vacuum on how slow fashion is portrayed on social media.

Sedek (2021) stated that the sustainable development initiative adopts environmental protection as one of its important goals. As a result, the research was conducted to measure the impact of the awareness campaigns to raise awareness of the effect of plastic pollution before and after the exposure to the campaigns and enhancing the changing in the unsustainable behaviour of the audience in the unsafe usage of plastic.

Zhao and Lee (2022) stated that several firms use social media to catch consumers' attention while promoting their environmental goals. This study examined the visual and linguistic information that sustainable fashion firms put on social media in order to better understand how they connect with their customers.

3.0 Research Methodology

Methodology is a systematic and logical analysis to the research problem. The **mixed method research design** methodology will be incorporated in the study.

3.1. Phases of Research

The study will be accomplished under two phases –

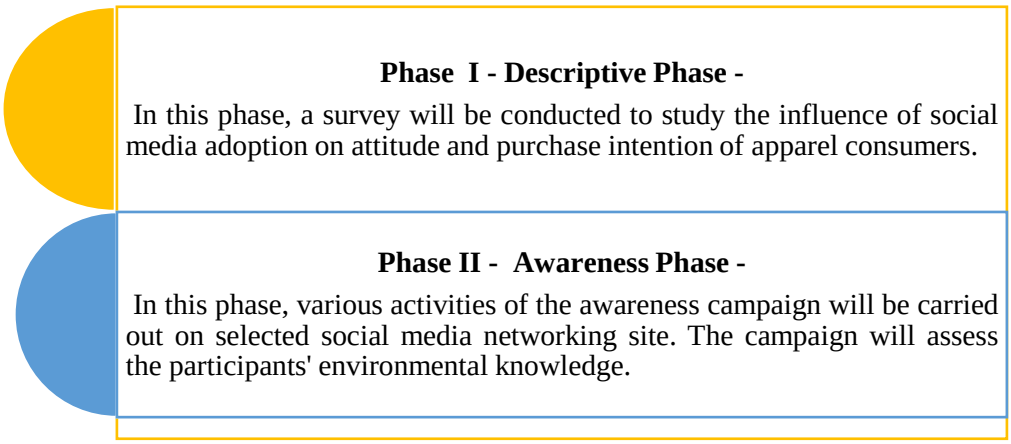

Phase I - Descriptive Phase -
In this phase, a survey will be conducted to study the influence of social media adoption on attitude and purchase intention of apparel consumers.
Phase II - Awareness Phase -
In this phase, various activities of the awareness campaign will be carried out on selected social media networking site. The campaign will assess the participants' environmental knowledge.

Fig – 4 Phases of study

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Data for the study will be gathered from secondary as well as primary sources.

Primary Data will be collected with the help of questionnaires that will be administered personally or in electronic form.

3.3 Survey instruments

3.3.1 Hypothesis Testing:

Following tools will be used for hypothesis testing –

Table No. – 1 Table of Reference Tools

S.NO	CONSTRUCT	REFERENCE TOOLS
1.	TAM Variables	Davis et al. (1992); Kim et al. (2009)
2.	External Influences	Angella & EunjuKo (2012); Kim et. al (2010)
3.	Attitude of the apparel consumers	Kim et al. (2009); Spears and Singh's (2004)
4.	Purchase Intention	Engel et al. (1995); Wakefield and Baker (1998) and as adapted by Lee et al. (2006).
5.	To assess the knowledge and Awareness	Self-constructed tools, based on the literature review

3.3.2 For Testing Knowledge and Awareness related to Sustainable Apparel Design

A self-constructed questionnaire will be designed to assess the knowledge and awareness of the participants related to Sustainable apparel design, post awareness campaign. The researcher will analyse the comments, reviews, and posts on the uploaded material.

4.0 Research Design

A sample design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from a given population. It refers to the technique or the procedure the researcher would adopt in selecting items for the sample.

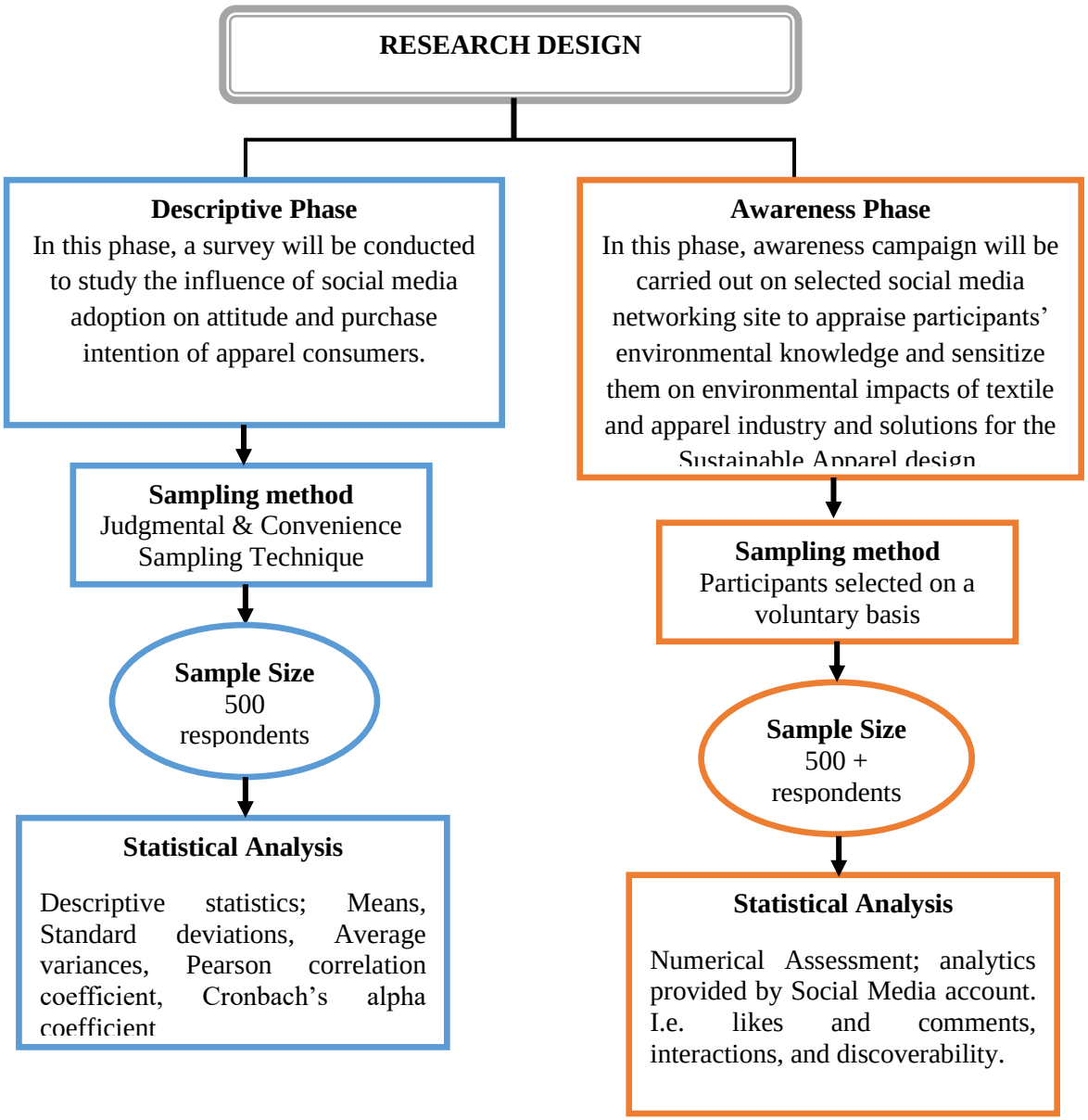

RESEARCH DESIGN
Descriptive Phase
In this phase, a survey will be conducted to study the influence of social media adoption on attitude and purchase intention of apparel consumers.
Sampling method
Judgmental & Convenience Sampling Technique
Sample Size
500 respondents
Statistical Analysis
Descriptive statistics; Means, Standard deviations, Average variances, Pearson correlation coefficient, Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Awareness Phase
In this phase, awareness campaign will be carried out on selected social media networking site to appraise participants' environmental knowledge and sensitize them on environmental impacts of textile and apparel industry and solutions for the Sustainable Apparel design
Sampling method
Participants selected on a voluntary basis
Sample Size
500 + respondents
Statistical Analysis
Numerical Assessment; analytics provided by Social Media account. I.e. likes and comments, interactions, and discoverability.

Fig – 5 Research Design

4.2 Limitations of the Study

1. The size of the sample size of 500 respondents being considered for the study in relation to the population of users is one of the limitations to the study.
2. The awareness campaign will be carried out on only one selected social media networking site.
3. The social media campaign will be restricted to only one theme i.e. sustainability in apparel design.
4. There are other perspectives or methods of conducting the study, all of which cannot be considered in this study due to constraint of time and resources.

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